

How to Spot a Social Climber (W/ Examples & Solutions)

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Social climbers are annoying, aren't they?

And how do you deal with a social climber?

By the end of this post, you will know both how to spot a social climber, and how to deal with one.

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Social Climbing Overview

I define social climbing as:

The act of raising one's own social status by either inflating one's own virtues and qualities or, more often, by depressing other people's social statuses and looking better as a consequence

We have already talked about social climbing in [leadership biggest mistake](#) and, later on, why [social climbing kills your social status](#).

Today we review the phenomenon of social climbing and we introduce a new type: the "social climbing in absentia".

Derived from Latin, "in absentia" means "while absent".

In this scenario, the social climber picks on someone who is not physically present to push him down while (he believes), pulling himself up by comparison.

Picking on someone who's not even there makes the job of the social climber extremely easy because, well... Absent people can't reply or hit back.

Social climbing in absentia tends to be mostly verbal because, most of the times, you can't turn your back or ignore someone who isn't there but you need to mention them and talk about them.

Why Social Climbing Is Bad

All social climbings have one thing in common: they seek to **increase the social climber status by attacking and taking status away from others**.

To any observer with even the slightest understanding of social dynamics, Social Climbing In Absentia makes you look even sneakier and powerless because, well... You're picking on people who can't even defend himself.

Social Climbing In Absentia also includes bragging and playing the lion role when there's no danger and no real risk.

It makes me think of this old [Family Guy skit](#):

That's what social climbing in absentia communicates: you're puffing your chest up behind people's back, which actually makes you look like a coward.

This is the same thing that [alpha male posturers](#) do all over the manosphere.

Social climbing in absentia communicates the following about the social climber:

- **Personal Insecurity**

People confident and comfortable in their own skin don't go around demeaning people so that they can look better by comparison.

- **Lack of Top Dog Status**

Who needs to tell others how great they are? Those who aren't that great, usually.

People at the top of the hierarchy don't engage in social climbing because, well... There is nowhere to go once you're on top.

And that's why social climbing communicates you're probably around the middle of the hierarchy and craving to be higher.

Sometimes you will see (clueless) top dogs engaging in social climbing though, and that's because he is afraid and insecure about his position.

- **Fear of Status Loss**

People who are the top and still social climb communicate that they are afraid of losing status to new upstarts (see "[upcoming young guns](#)").

That also screams insecurity in their own personal power and a highly defensive attitude with an unhealthy focus on power (see [Obama doing it](#)).

- **Sneakiness**

All social climbing are sneaky.

But Social Climbing In Absentia is *especially* sneaky.

Everyone will think he's picking on the absent because it's easier and because he's afraid of saying it with the person physically present.

Also people who preemptively strike first are afraid of being hit. When you attack and demean the people around, it says you're afraid of the competition (as it happens with [jealous boyfriends](#)).

- **Fixed Mindset**

People who always need to show how good they are often derive their own self-esteem by being “good” and “better” than others.

It’s a rather clear sign someone has a fixed mindset (read more: [Mindset by Carol Dweck](#) and [how to overcome a fixed mindset](#))

- **Cold / Spiteful**

As a last note, but also extremely important, social climbing in absentia makes you look like you are a cold, spiteful person.

Deep, strong relationships are built on positive feelings of rapport, caring and human compassion. People who demean and viciously attack others show none of these.

Social Climbing Examples

There are different ways of engaging in social climbing.

Here are some of the most typical ones, with examples:

#1. Direct Attack Social Climb

The direct demeaning way includes statements such as:

- That guy is an idiot
- She’s such bi*ch
- He’s so incompetent

They sound more like simple slanderous comment, but the hidden message is always “I am better”.

#2. Denying Skills Social Climb

- He can’t manage to do it
- She doesn’t know any better
- If she only knew that..

They are all saying “I could do it (better)”, “I know better”.

#3. Cool A*shole Social Climb

This is how “Social Climbing In Absentia” usually develops.

And it’s often through telling a favorable story.

The story can then either show the social climber getting mad recognition he doesn’t even care about or, worse, it will show the social climber belittling others and getting away with it.

The social climber is trying to position himself as the “cool asshole”.

Below is an example of using a story to belittle someone else:

Evan Carmichael brags the handyman recognized him and Evan had no idea who that guy was.

He is drawing social value from the power dynamics of “[you know me, I don’t know you](#)”.

When the handyman says he’s a fan and Evan replies “*oh that’s great, clean my air filter*” he social climbs with the implication that the handyman is just one of the many (idiots) who seek value and bonding from him (needy position).

Basically he uses the handyman to paint himself as the cool VIP who’s got no time to waste with those beneath him.

Just ask yourself:

Would you want to be close with someone treating the people around him like that?

Possibly not, because it also communicates he’s only your friend as long as you’re above him or can do something for him (read: [the theory of social exchange](#)).

#4. **“No Harm” Social Climb**

The “no harm” social climb is more positive in the sense that it does not directly demean or attack others.

In this instance the social climber will tell about other people being impressed by his skills or performance, or cheering him up, or respecting him.

This is the most typical kind of “bragging”.

Some example would be someone saying:

- *“Everybody was lost, so I just took charge and saved the day”*
- *“God such a good game, I scored 3 and everyone was like “dude, you’re a beast”*
- *“.. Then I whipped off my oversized weenie and she went craaaazy”*

Of course, the “no harm” refers to no harm to anyone else.

Because the social climber still harms his own social status.

In the [early pick-up artists](#) this was called “demonstrating higher value”, and it was likely destroying their social value instead.

Of course, that also depends on who the audience is.

[High quality men](#) and [high quality women](#) see through these games and will think the social climber is a loser trying too hard.

[Lower quality individuals](#) might instead be somewhat impressed.

Social Climbing: The Exceptions

There are a few situations in which social climbing is OK, or even helpful to your interaction.

They include:

- **Locker room bantering**

The last one, the “no harm bragging” is cute and could even make you endearing to some people and in some situations.

It’s ok with friends and for “locker room talks”.

As long as you don't overdo it, when you really feel proud and happy about something, you shouldn't refrain from expressing it.

Being yourself is also part of building solid relationships and people close to you will appreciate you for being genuine (read: [Daring Greatly](#)).

- **In seduction to build an “us VS them” bond**

There's also another exception when demeaning others is OK, and it's during the early stages of a romance.

In those cases, it's OK because it's more flirting than demeaning and you are going for two possible frames there:

1. How lucky she is to be with this great guy that you are.
2. Look how great *we* are in this world of boring people (us VS the world)

All the other situations, social climbing must be eradicated.

How to Deal With a Social Climber

Now on the other side of the equation: how do you deal with a social climber?

Here are a few great tips:

1. Ignore Them

If they do it not in front of you like in this case, ignore them.

When they engage in social climbing the really socially smart people see that.

Basically, social climbers are taking away their own value: let them do that.

When you recognize their behavior and address it you also dignify their action with your attention. You bring them to your own level.

Why bother.

2. Stop Them In Their Track

When people are using you for their social climbing effort, they are [actively undermining you](#), and you should intervene.

Whatever they say against you, look at them like they said the most stupid thing in the world.

For example:

Social Climber: (looking at someone else in the group, but referring to you) He doesn't know any better

You: Mate... Why are you saying that. The way you speak you make me sound like I am an idiot and I am not cool with that.

Why are you doing that?

Social Climber: ? What do you mean, I just meant...

You: No man, you said I don't know any better. I don't know why you feel like you need to

treat people that way. Maybe it's some inferiority complex or something, but whatever it is, if you cannot talk to me politely, please don't talk to me at all.

Also read: [how to throw people under the bus](#).

The last one is my favorite:

3. Explain Their Game

This is a technique we already spoke about in the [Alpha Male Handshake](#).

It consists of you eloquently and openly explaining to everyone what they are up to.

Basically, you summarize this article explaining what they're doing it (pushing people down), why they're doing it (to gain social status) and why it's nasty (high quality people pull people *up*, not down).

If you execute it well, you will shame the social climber while at the same time shooting your own value through the roof.

4. Confront Them

While most guides, books and websites recommend you confront them, I don't actually like this option.

As I have stated many times already, the social climbers are actively harming themselves and they are jealous of you.

Going straight to them will not make them stop being jealous of you.

The only time I would recommend you confront them is when what they say is actually, really harming you (a minority of cases).

Otherwise, if you are angry, I recommend you [use that anger to fuel you even further ahead](#).

Remember, the best revenge is always success.

Also read:

- [Dealing with underminers](#)
- [How to spot a frenemy](#)
- [How to deal with people who are subtly rude](#)

How to Stop Being A Social Climber

This section will talk about how to eliminate all social climbing tendencies within yourself.

Yes, don't worry, we all have social climbing tendencies.

And before we address them within others, we must remove it from our system.

[John Maxwell](#) says you should sign your work at the end of each day.

Similarly, a good rule for yourself would be: only say what you would say personally to people's face. And only comment if you were willing to write that comment down with your own signature on it.

Even better, eventually, you want to become a genuine person who feels no need to push people down as much as you have no need to self-aggrandize yourself.

When you become a confident man focused on himself and who is living his life and pursuing his goals independently of what the people in the grandstands think, you will have no interest in social climbing.

And when you will become a compassionate man, you will not want to push people down but you will want to help the people around get better and move up.

That's the man you have to want to become

Social Climbing: Summary

Social climbing attacks people to remove their status and inflate the attacker's status.

Social Climbing In Absentia means taking social status away from people *who are not physically* present to make the climber look better by comparison.

It's terrible behavior.

If you catch yourself socially climbing by demeaning others, cut it out. It says terrible things about you and it's preventing you from building great relationships, both with friends, family and with romantic partners.

And if you notice people around you doing it, it's time to reconsider your friends :).

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